



Cambridge Archaeology Field Group

***Field walking on sites near the
Deserted Medieval Village of Clopton***

CHER Number ECB6310

Scheduled monument 1006883

TL 299488

Part 2: Oct 2020 to Nov 2020

Summary

Field walking investigations near the scheduled Deserted Medieval Village site at Clopton (around TL299 488) began in 2018 with a preliminary visit by some CAFG (Cambridge Archaeology Field Group) members. This revealed the presence of a quantity of surface pottery finds on the arable land to the north and west of the DMV site. Subsequently, a series of targeted field walking activities were carried out during 2018/19 on the fields north and south of the bridleway from Arrington to Tadlow and to the west of the scheduled area. These recovered concentrations of surface finds dating over multiple periods, from the Bronze Age, the Iron Age, the Roman period, the Saxon period, the Medieval and the Post medieval periods. This has been covered in Part 1 of this report. During 2020 further walking south of the trackway and extending westwards for over 750 metres produced more finds of a similar nature, as covered in this Part 2. The density of finds decreased the further west the area was searched and this enables us to identify the likely extent of the settlement to the west. The knowledge is an important addition to the information known about this major local DMV site.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to the CAFG members who carried out the field walking and subsequent processing of these finds. Also to Paul Blinkhorn for his excellent work and rapid turnaround of the pottery identification. CAFG would like to thank Cambridge Antiquarian Society for their continued support and the grant used to fund this pottery identification work.

Thanks also to the owners of Top Farm and Velcourt Ltd for permission to carry out the field walking on the area around the DMV and for their continued support.

Thanks to William Franklin for his work on plotting of the finds distribution.

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Field walking at the DMV of Clopton

Location and topography

The site lies some 16km south west of Cambridge, approximately 1.5km west of Croydon village and 3km west of Ermine Street (A1198), see Figure 1. It overlooks the B1042 Cambridge to Biggleswade road.

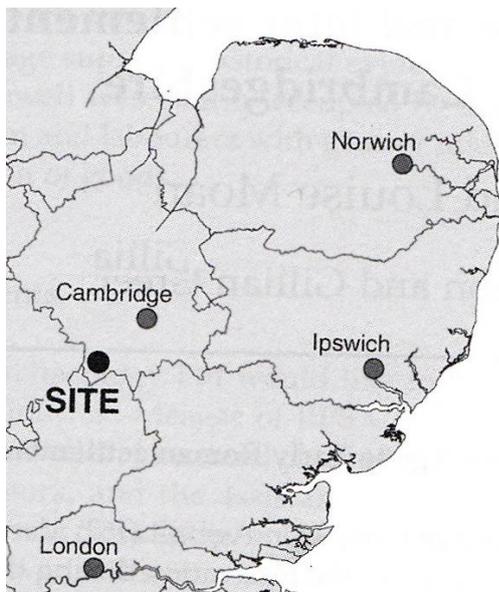


Figure 1. Location of the site. (adapted from OS mapping).

The site lies on a south facing scarp where the geology is composed of boulder clay on top of chalk marl overlying gault clay. Height varies from 25m OD at the river valley base to 75m OD at the top and there is a spring line at the chalk base.

CAFG field walking programme

Field area B had been completed in November 2019. The field walking programme for Clopton in 2020 started in October on field area C (see Figure 2) south of the Arrington to Tadlow trackway (ECB6310). The westward extremity walked was reached when finds became very few in number.

The field had been roughly prepared and was in a reasonably dry condition. The usual format of walking transects 10m apart in the direction of the cultivation lines was used, the lines being approximately parallel to the western boundary of the DMV site. Finds were picked up and bagged every 10m, with the bags attached to canes marking their position. Subsequently the bags were tagged and the positions of the canes recorded

using a Garmin eTrex10 hand-held GPS to produce a list of OS co-ordinates for mapping.

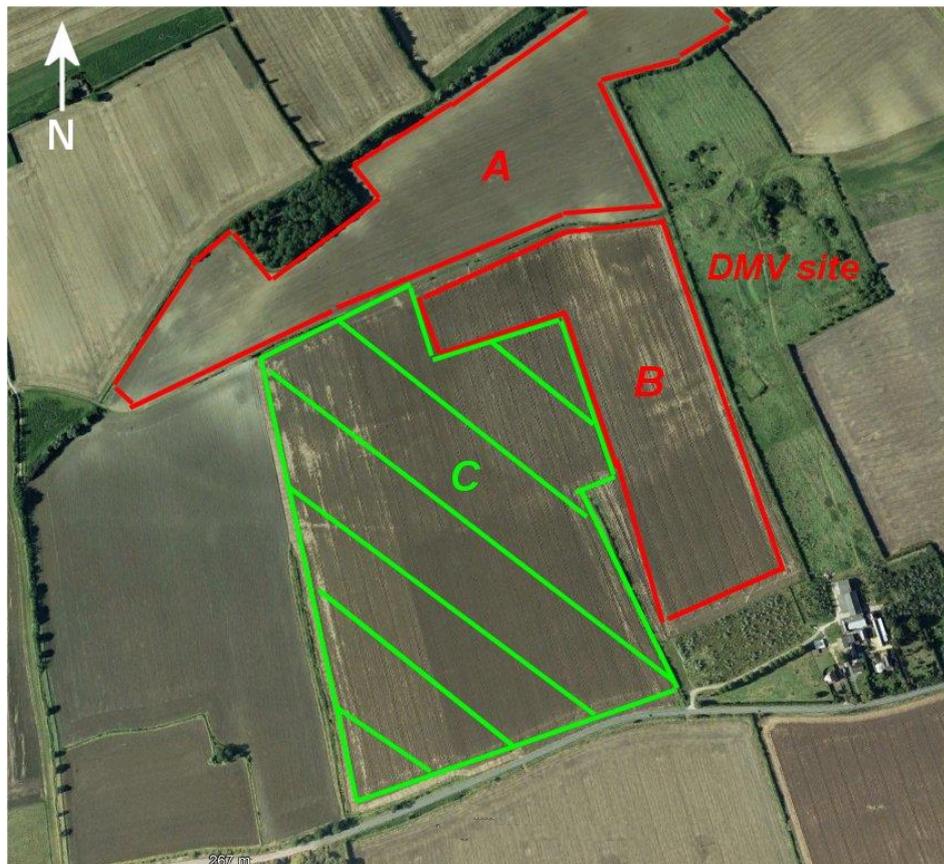


Figure 2. Position of field C relative to fields A and B walked previously

Results of the CAFG field walking

Pottery and building material from most periods were recovered, shown in Table 1 for Field C (CAFG designation CLP002) using values taken from our original finds sheets.

Pottery					Brick & Tile					Flint	
Pr/Sax	Rom	Med	PMed	Unc	Rom	Med	PMed	Metal	Glass	Struck	Burnt
481	34	1180	117	7	1	14	211	19	5	7	1

Table 1. Total number of pieces found in each category for Field C.

The column labelled “Unc” are pieces that could not be positively identified but they could represent more Roman period pieces. The Pre/Sax column represents pottery believed to be early in date but where the date is unsure. The flints were mostly waste flakes but with an occasional blade. There were a number of items listed under the

heading “Others” on our original spreadsheet, including 47 pieces of lava quern stone and 5 pieces of slag. One piece of puddingstone quern was an unusual find for the site. A total of 23 pieces of oyster shell, 106 bones and 1 animal tooth were also recovered along with two modern whetstones and 13 pieces of clay tobacco pipe.

Also recovered were 9 pieces of daub, 9 pieces of slate, one piece of mortar and 14 pieces of coprolite (there was known coprolite mining on the site).

Pottery finds evaluation.

Although the pottery recovered by our field walking is mostly abraded smaller pieces, it is possible to do some analysis of the pottery types found. A full analysis of the pottery recovered so far has been carried out by Paul Blinkhorn, and Appendix 1 lists the main types recorded using his classification system.

Discussion

The identifications of pottery finds by historical period and type (using Paul Blinkhorn’s classification) for the continuation of CLP002 are shown in the Table 2 and Figure 3 below. Totals for the 19/20th C are low because the bulk of this period’s finds were removed during preliminary sorting.

Period	Bronze Age	Iron Age	Roman	Saxon	Medieval	Late med	Post med	19/20th C
No. of pieces	9	6	34	466	1072	108	98	19

Table 2. Numbers of pottery found for each historical period in Field C.

The date profile of the pottery recovered by CAFG from the field to the south of the Arrington – Tadlow trackway in 2020 is largely a continuation of the previous findings reported in Part 1. Our field walking in 2020 produced more confirmation of the presence of small amounts of Bronze Age and Iron Age pottery to the west of the current scheduled area.

The profile largely agrees with the findings of John Alexander (1968), who suggested a first period of occupation was in the 2nd – 4th C Roman era, based on surface and excavation finds. He reports only five sherds from the Early Saxon period (7th – 9th C) which is when he dates the establishment of the village.

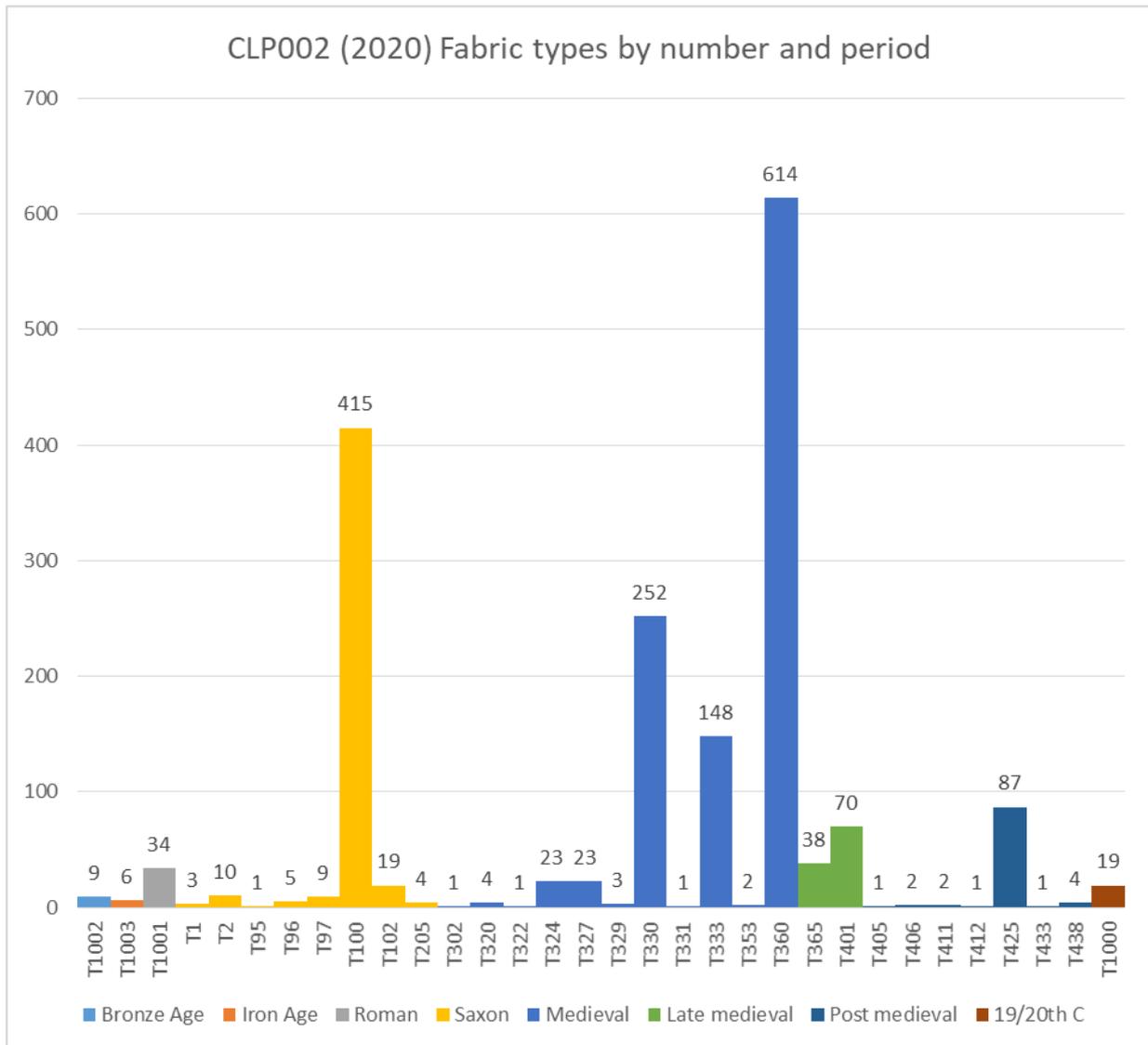


Figure 3. Pottery distribution by fabric types, numbers of pieces and period.

(The small number of Early Saxon finds found by field walking is probably due to the fragile nature of pottery from this period which does not survive well in plough soil). He also noted that in the 14th C there were 104 taxpayers but by the late 15th C there were only 6 households recorded. This coincides with the enclosure of the area in c.1495AD by John Fisher for sheep grazing. By the 16th C there were only two houses and the ecclesiastical parish had become extinct by 1561AD.

Distribution plots

The following distribution plots (courtesy of William Franklin) show the extent of the pottery finds from each of the main periods.

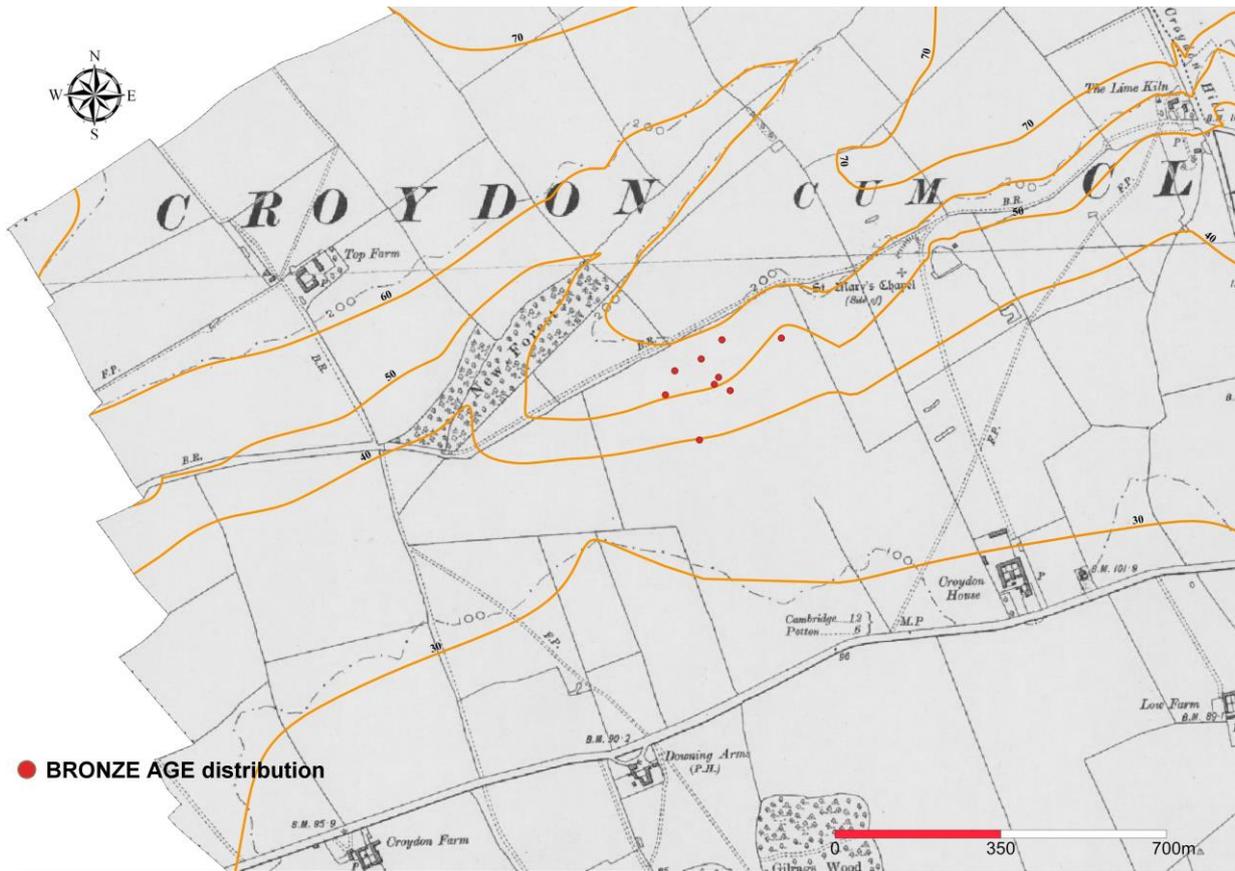


Figure 4. Pottery distribution for Bronze Age period finds.

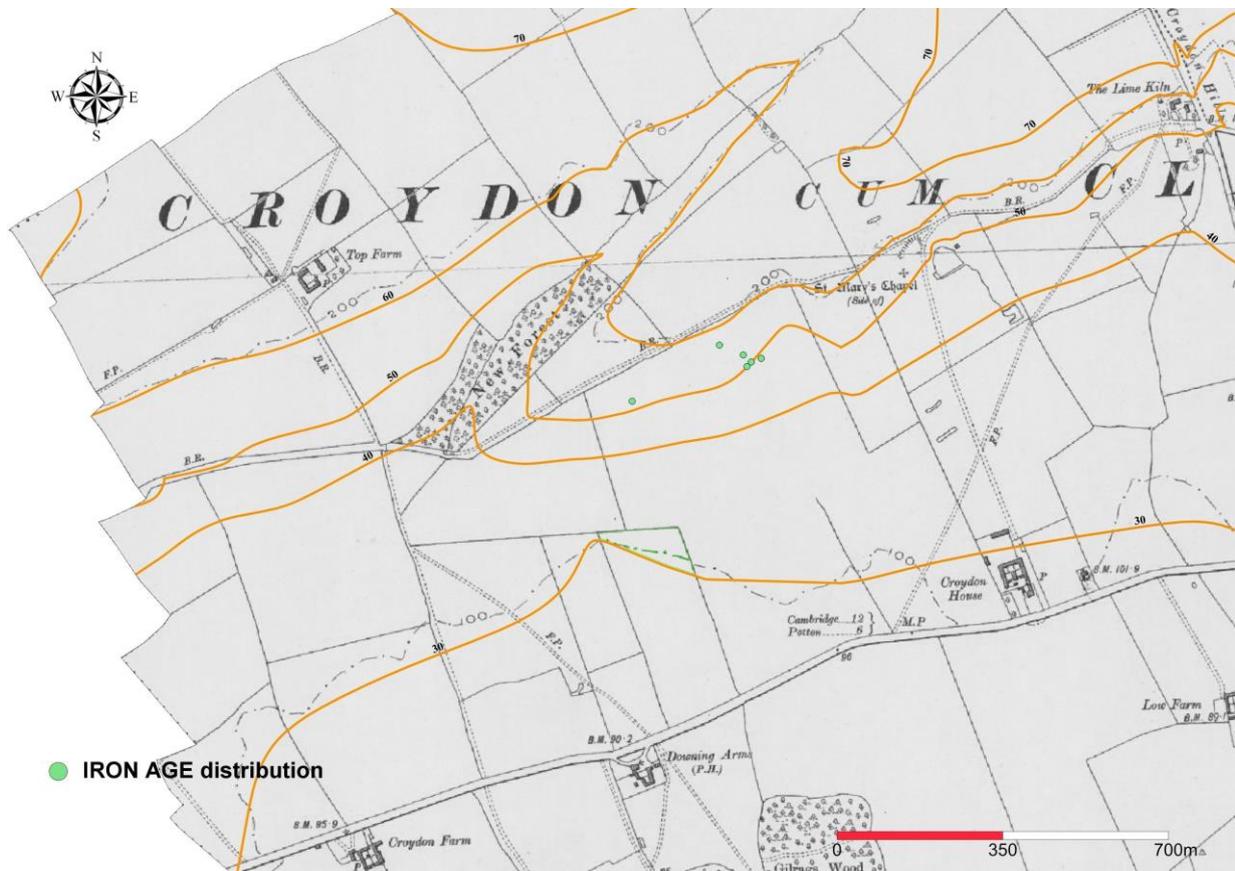


Figure 5. Pottery distribution for Iron Age period finds.

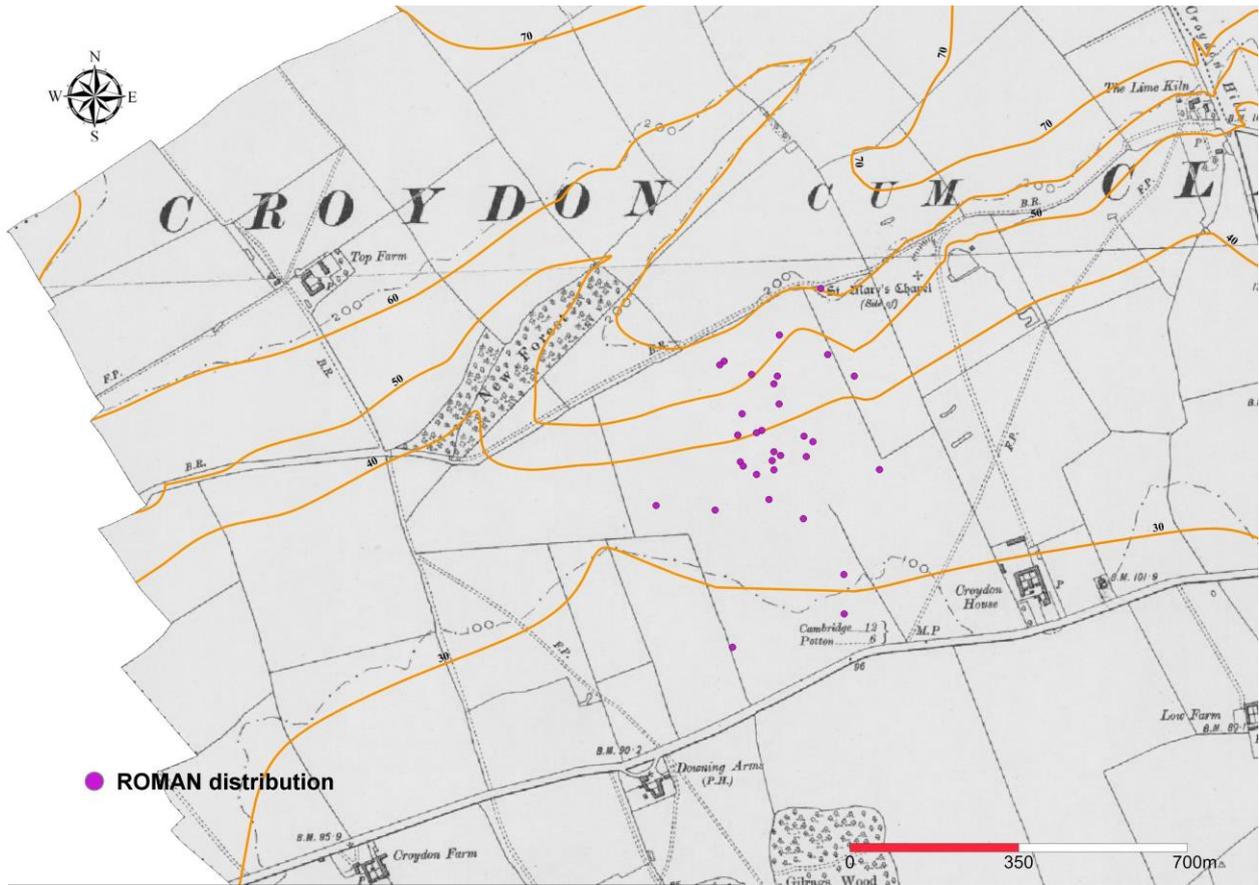


Figure 6. Pottery distribution for Roman period finds.

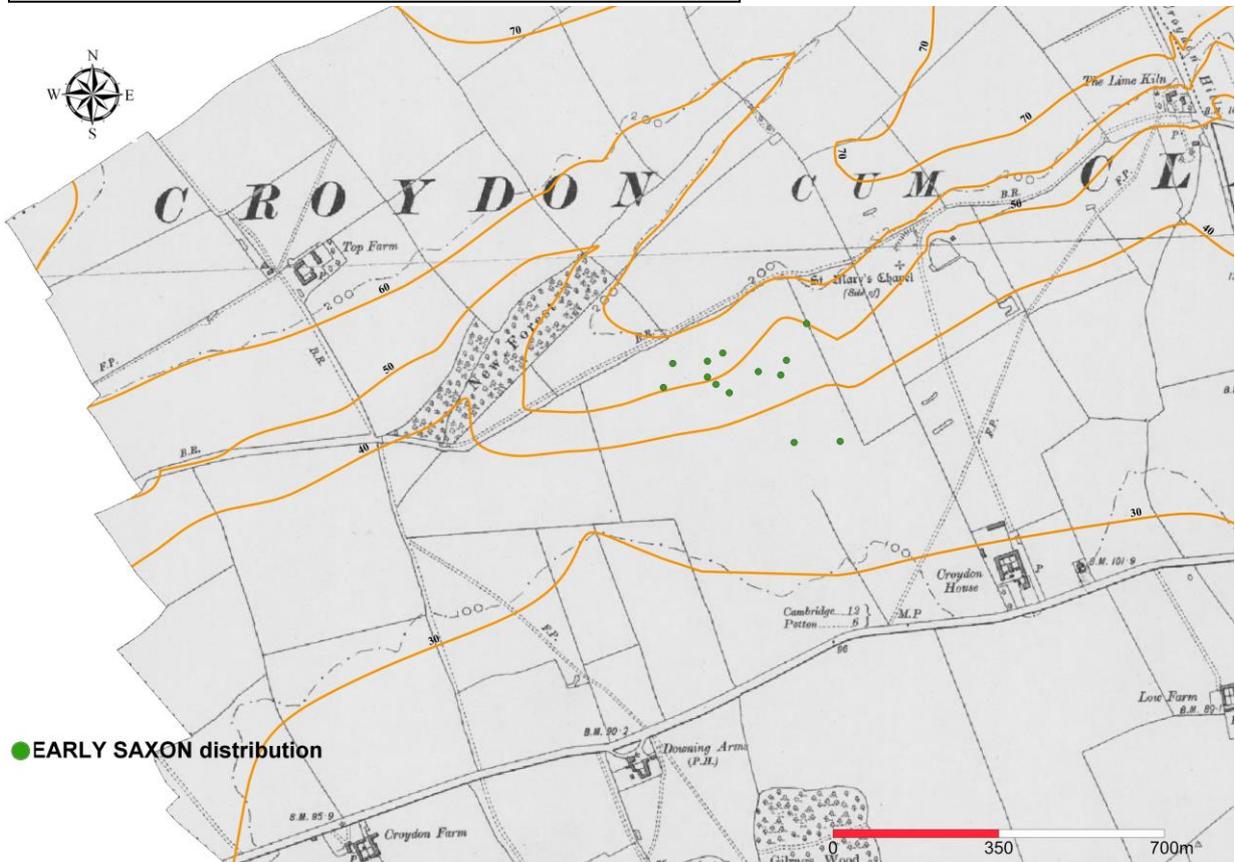


Figure 7. Pottery distribution for Early Saxon period finds.

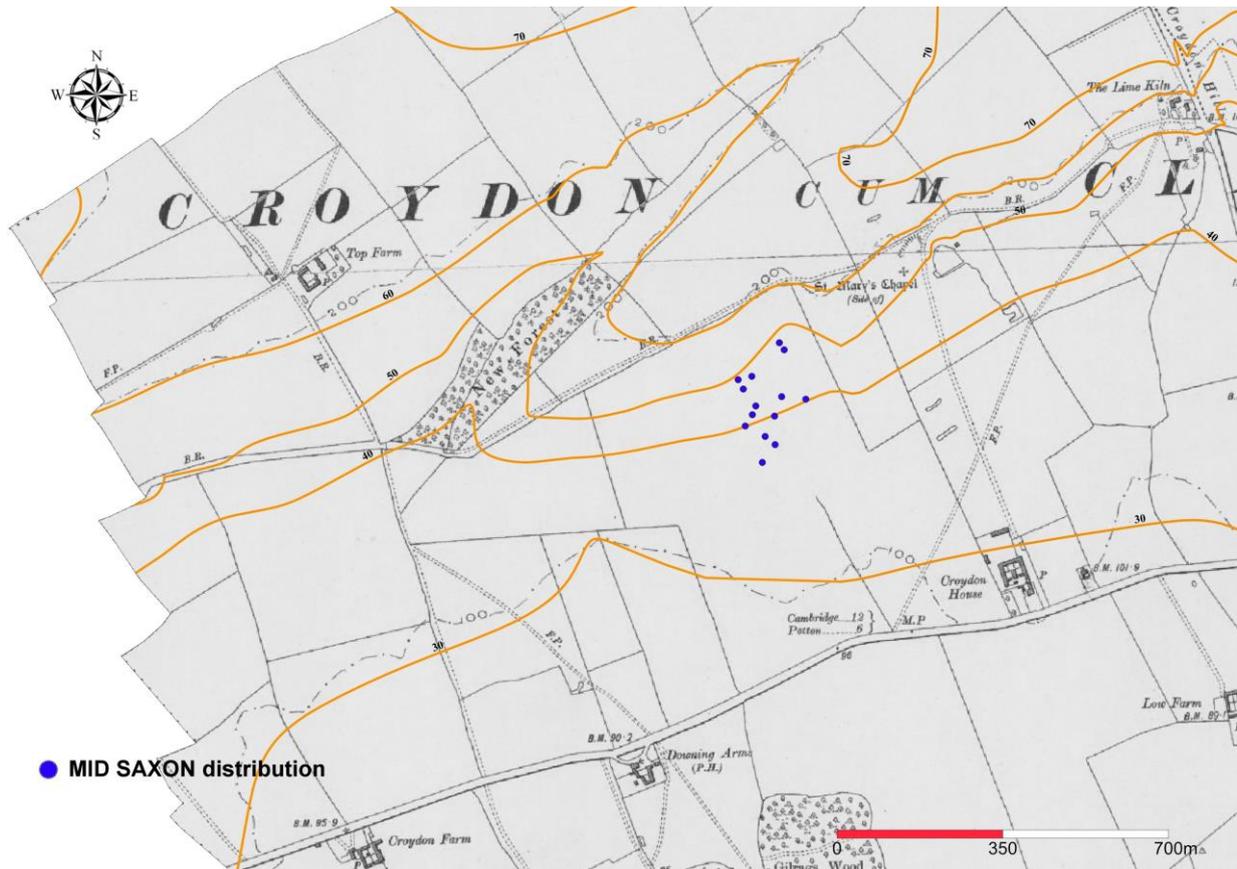


Figure 8. Pottery distribution for Middle Saxon period finds.

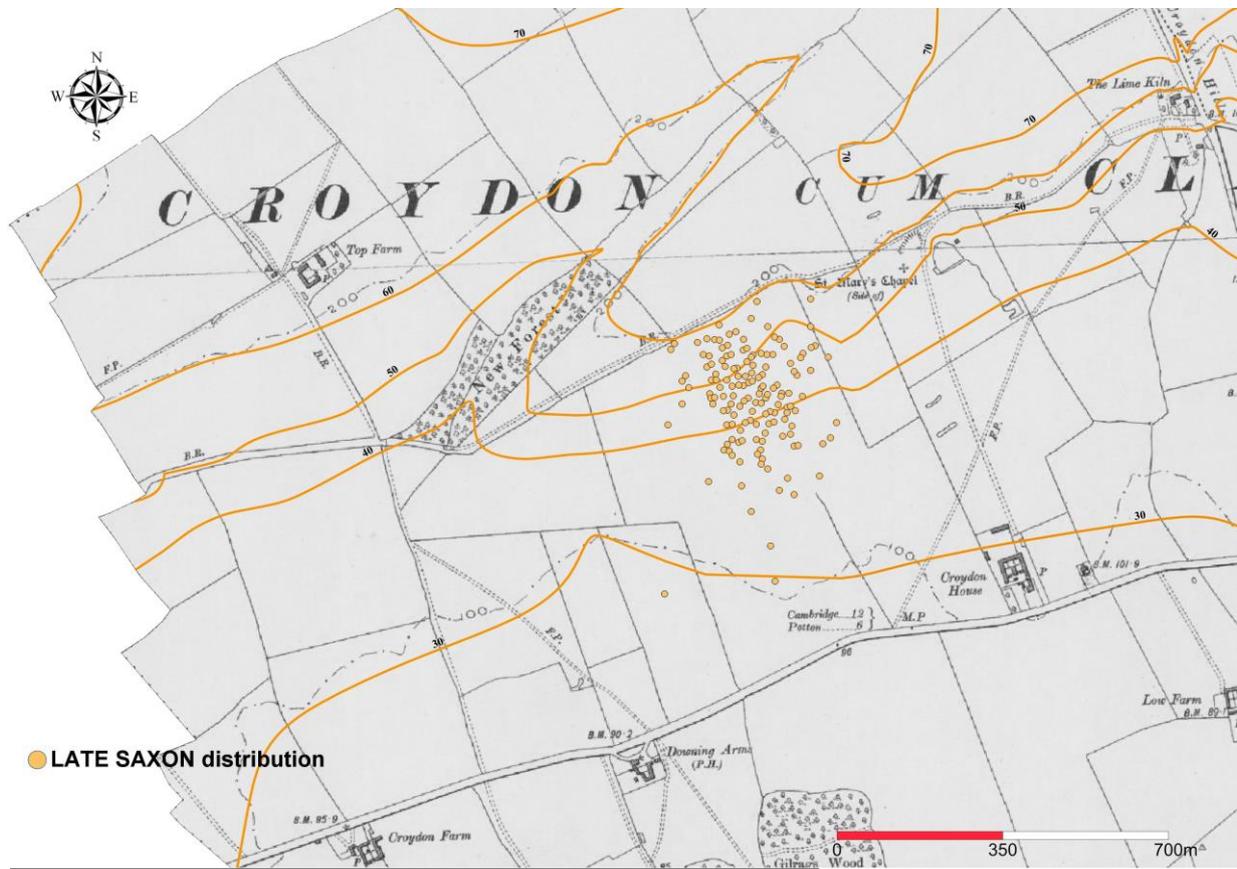


Figure 9. Pottery distribution for Late Saxon period finds.

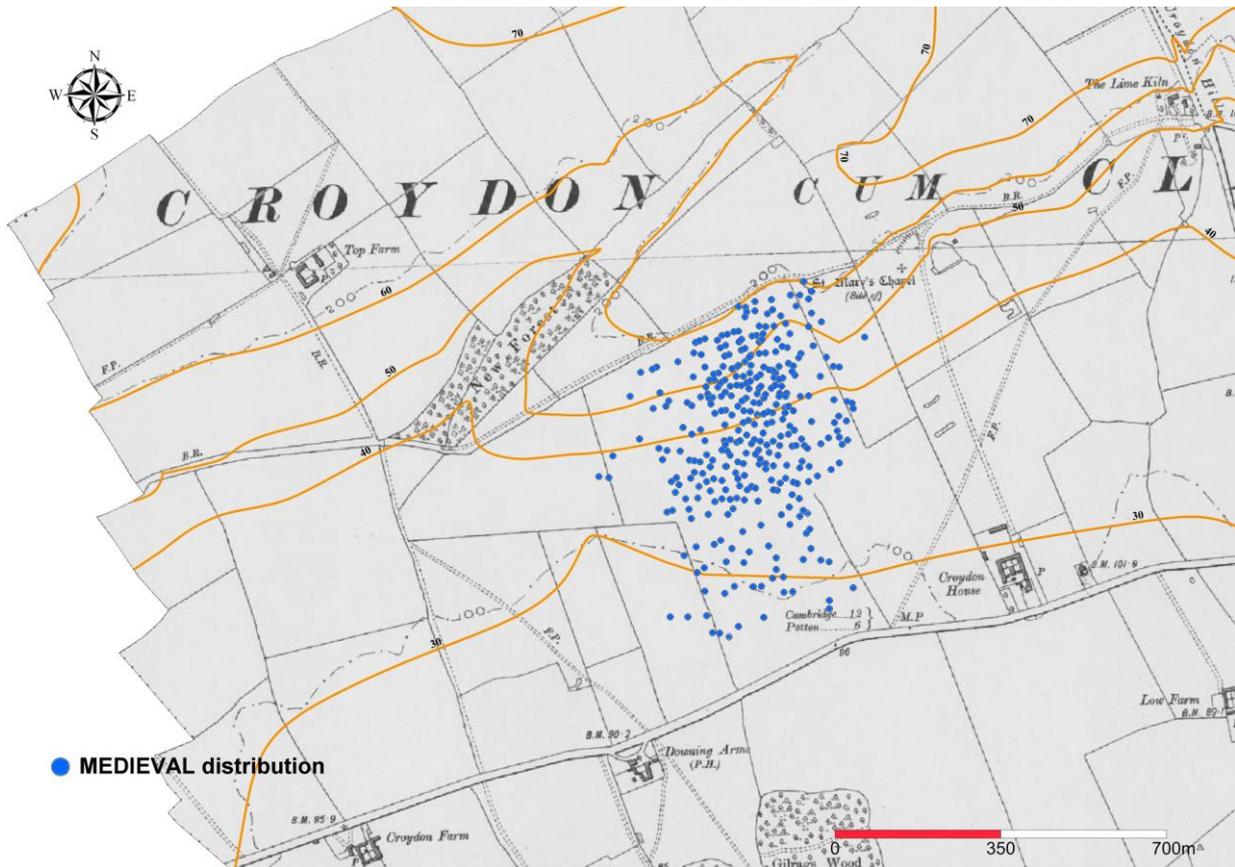


Figure 10. Pottery distribution for medieval period finds.

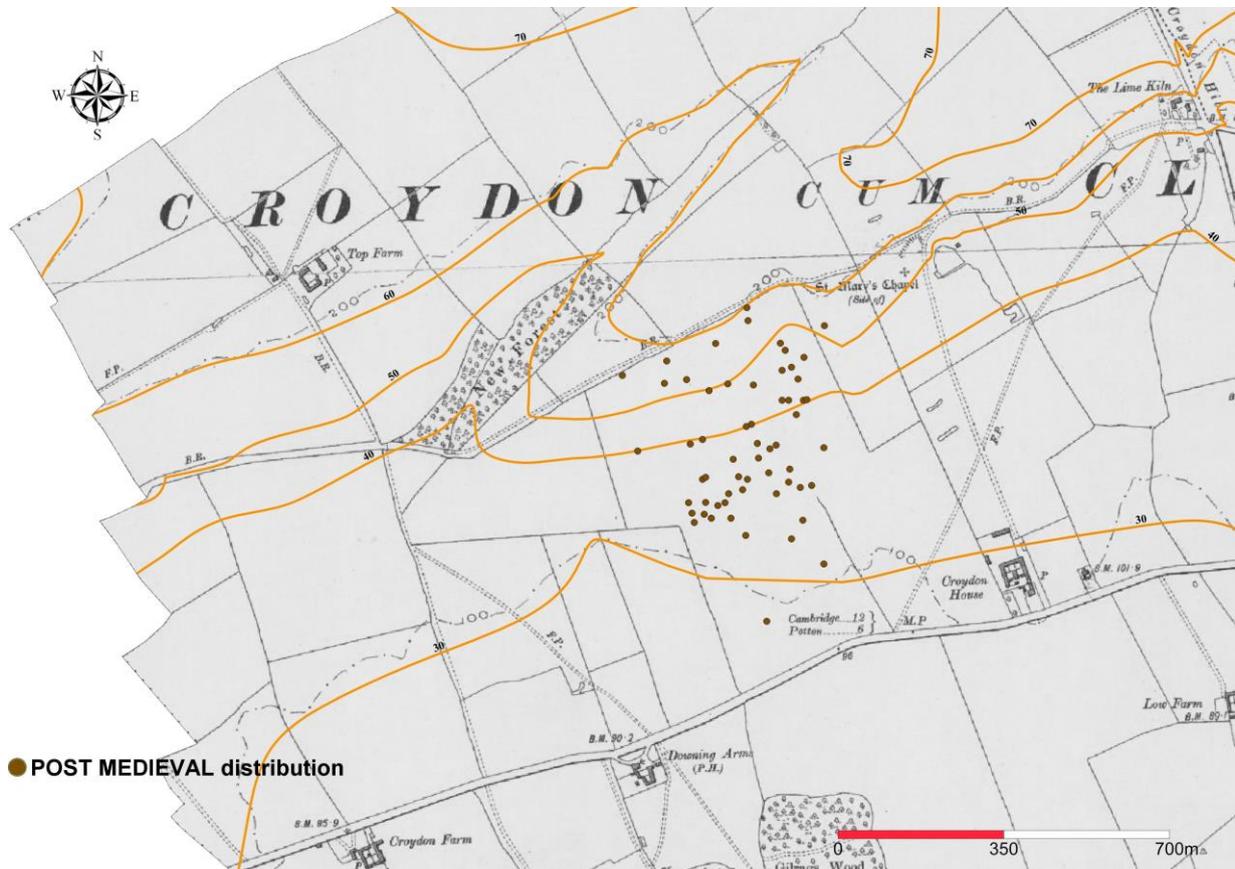


Figure 11. Pottery distribution for Post medieval finds.

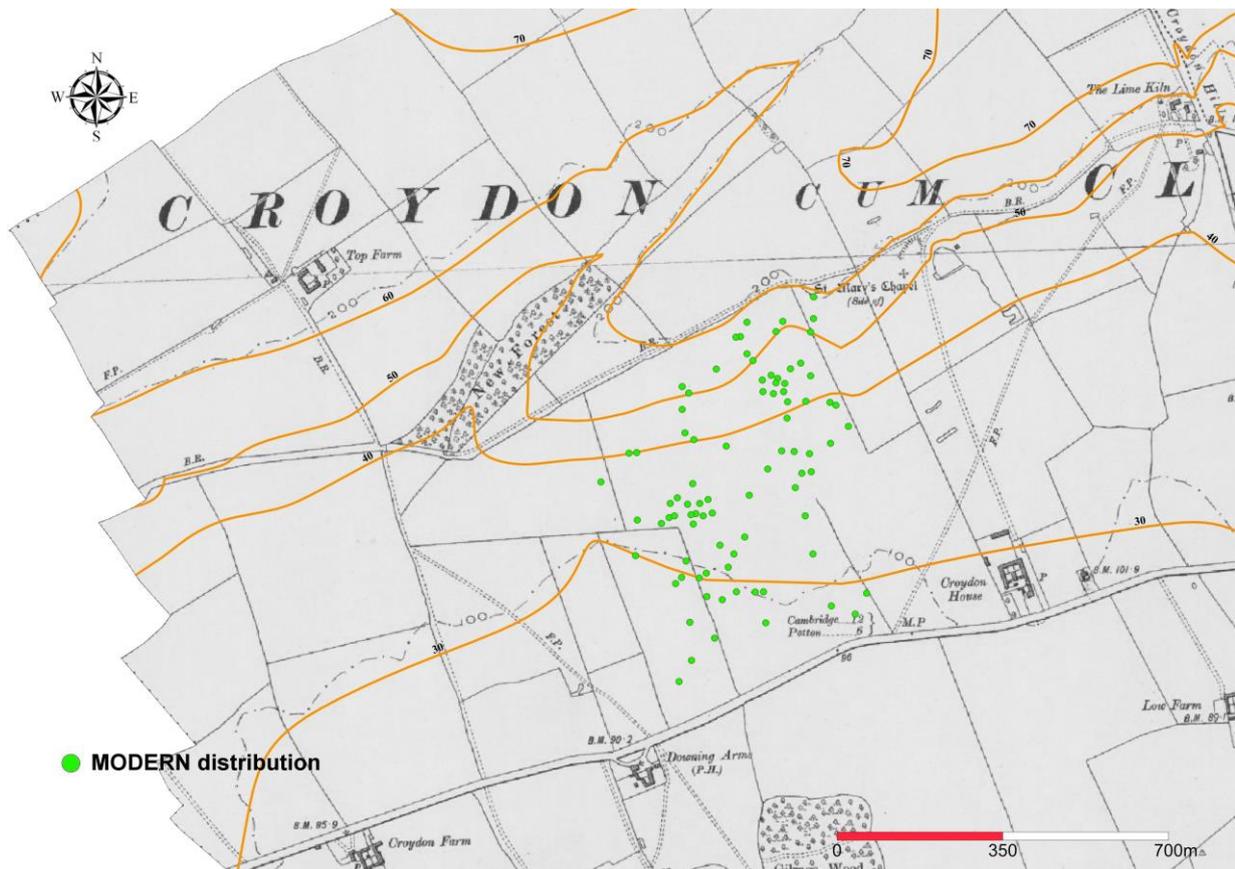


Figure 12. Pottery distribution for Modern finds.

The small number of Bronze Age finds south of the trackway lie some 300 metres further westwards from those illustrated in Part1 of the Clopton report. This is part way down slope and fairly close to the current spring line. The Iron Age finds found this time largely coincide with the position of the current Bronze Age finds and confirms the prehistoric activity lies some way from the presumed centre of the later medieval activity. They lie mostly south of the trackway but close to it.

The Roman finds are more clustered near the western edge of the scheduled area but extend some 450 metres westwards from that boundary. They also extend from the crest of the ridge right the way down to the lower ground alongside the modern B1042 road.

The Early and Mid-Saxon period finds occupy a similar area to the Roman finds but do not go downhill as far. However, there are clearly many more Late Saxon finds compared to the earlier Saxon period finds. A clear limit to the westwards spread of

the finds appears with the suggestion of an “edge” some 300 metres from the scheduled area’s western boundary.

The medieval finds are prolific and extend some 700 metres west of the scheduled area boundary, again with an apparent edge to the pottery spread. The sheer quantity of medieval finds correlates well with this period being when the village was at its peak in terms of occupancy and the area inhabited.

The post medieval/modern finds appear to be randomly scattered over the area walked

Quernstones

Apart from the significant pottery finds there were an unusual number of quernstone finds. Forty seven pieces of lava quernstone and a single piece of a beehive type puddingstone top stone constitute rather more finds of this material than we have previously encountered on a single field. Figure 13 shows the distribution plot for the quernstone material.

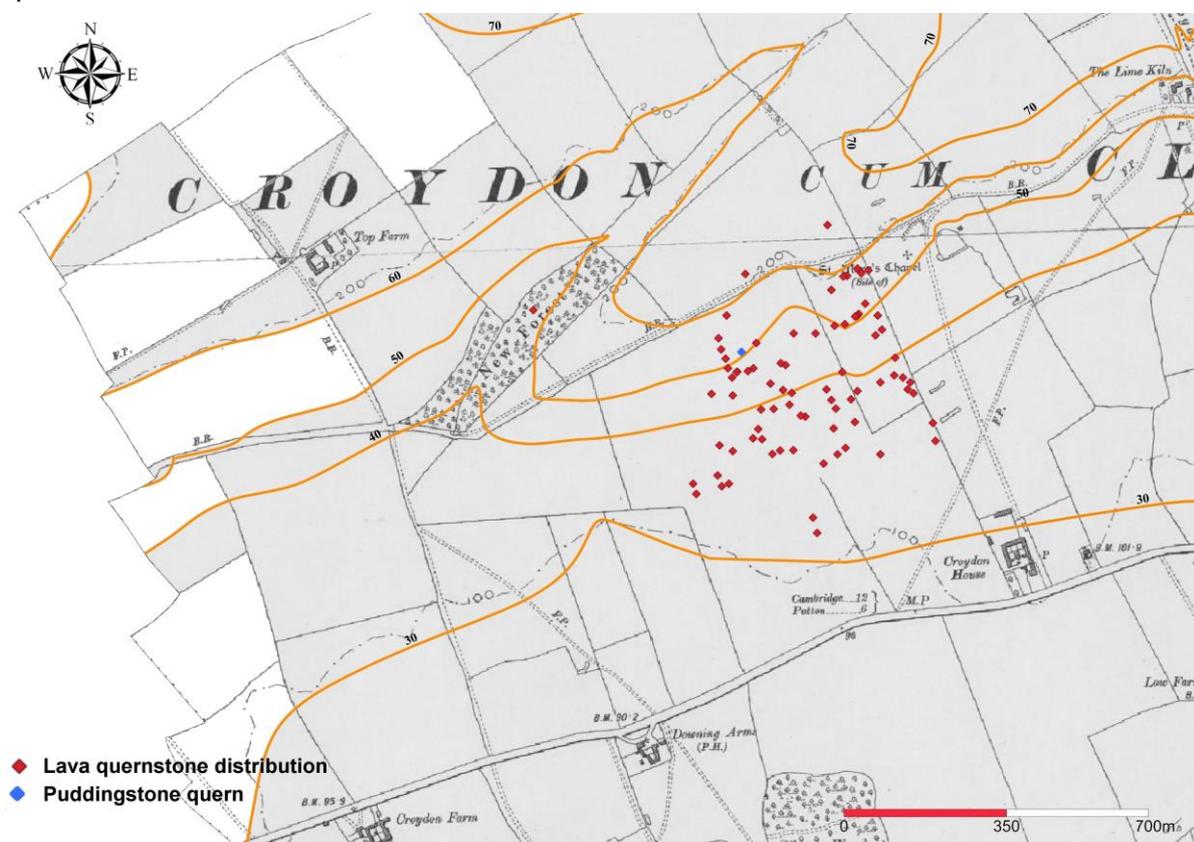


Figure 13. Quernstone distribution of finds.

This shows that their positions coincide with the pottery plots for the Roman through to the medieval period. It is not possible to date which period they come from as they were typically used over that whole length of time. However, their small size means they were almost certainly domestic items rather than coming from the manor watermill which existed on this site (see area "f" in the RCHM drawing in Appendix 2 for the mill site). Where a sufficiently large enough piece was found to estimate a diameter for the complete lava stone, the calculated diameter comes in at greater than 40cms. The stone was 5.2cm thick and the hole for a handle was some 4cm in diameter. The shape of this upper stone appears to be more similar to a Roman style quernstone, as shown in Figure 14, than an Anglo-Saxon type. (See www.cafg.net for more information on quernstones).

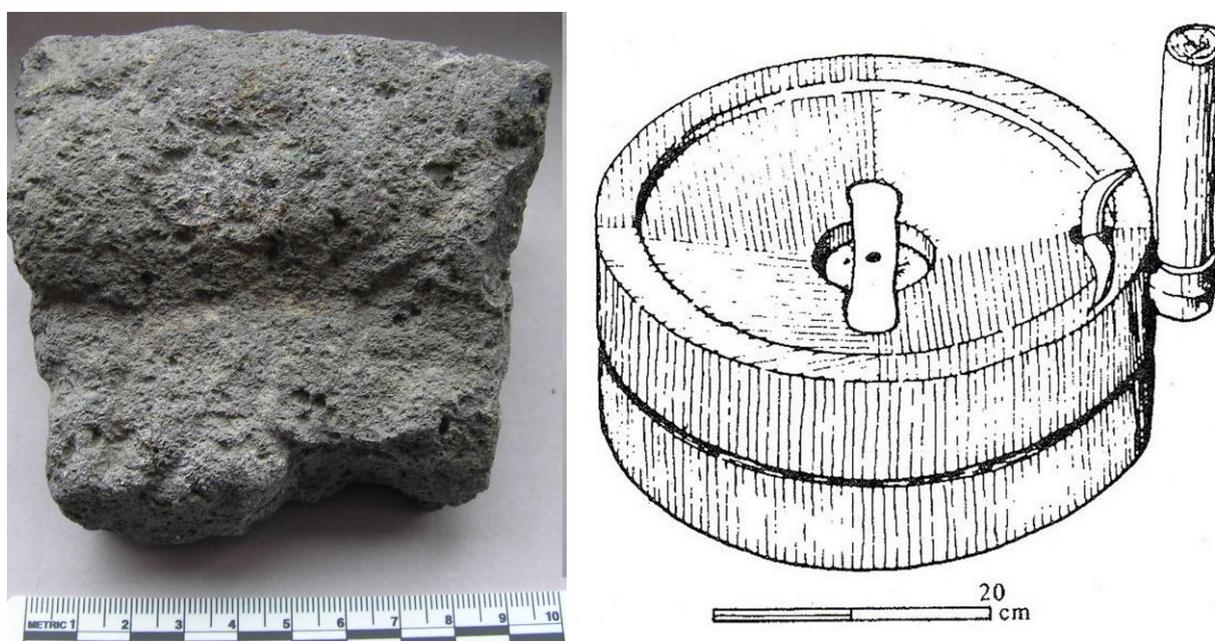


Figure 14. Upper lava quernstone fragment from Clopton showing the raised rim and a reconstruction of a Roman period quern with a similar rim.

Future work on this site.

A brief investigation of the field north of the trackway and east of the scheduled area produced little pottery (the field south of the trackway was not walkable set-aside). This suggests that Alexander was correct in his statement that there was no settlement east of the scheduled area. Walking the fields east of the scheduled area remains an option for the future.

Bibliography

Alexander, J. 1968, Clopton: the life-cycle of a Cambridgeshire village, *East Anglian Studies*, Heffer, p48 – 70.

RCHM 1968, *An inventory of Historical Monuments in the County of Cambridge: Volume 1: West Cambridgeshire*. London: HMSO, p76 – 78.

<http://www.cafg.net/docs/articles/Querns%20and%20quern%20stones.pdf>

Version 0.2

TCD

Appendix 1. List of pottery types found, Paul Blinkhorn classification

F1001:	All Romano-British.				
F1002:	Iron Age. Shell and/or grog-tempered.				
F1003:	Bronze Age. Flint-tempered.				
F1:	E/MSax Organic-tempered Wares, 5th - 9th century				
F2:	E/MSax Sandy Wares, 5th - 9th century				
F95:	Ipswich Ware, Gp 1 fabric, AD720-850 (Blinkhorn 2012)				
F96:	Ipswich Ware, Gp 2 fabric, AD720-850 (Blinkhorn 2012)				
F97:	Raunds Maxey-type Ware, AD650-850 (Blinkhorn 2009)				
F100:	St Neots Ware, AD900-1200 (Denham 1985)				
F102:	Thetford Ware, AD850-1100 (Rogerson and Dallas 1984)				
F205:	Stamford Ware, AD850-1250 (Kilmurry 1980).				
F209:	Oolitic Ware, AD975-1300 (Blinkhorn 2010).				
F301:	Ely Ware, mid 12th -15th century (Spoerry 2008)				
F322:	Lyveden/Stanion 'D' Ware, 1350-1550 (Blinkhorn 2008)				
F324:	Brill/Boarstall Ware, AD1200-1600 (Mellor 1994).				
F327:	Hedingham Ware, late 12th - 14th century (Walker 2012).				
F328:	Grimston Ware, 13th - 15th century (Leah 1994).				
F329:	Potterspury Ware, 1250-1600 (Mynard 1970)				
F330:	Shelly Coarseware, AD1100-1400 (McCarthy 1979).				
F333:	Hertfordshire-type Grey Ware, mid 12th - 14th century (Turner-Rugg 1993).				
F353:	Cambridgeshire Sgraffito Ware, AD1350-1500 (Spoerry 2016)				
F360:	Miscellaneous Medieval Sandy Wares, 11th - 14th century.				
F365:	Late Medieval Reduced Ware, late 14th - 16th century (Blinkhorn 2007)				
F401:	Late Medieval Transitional Wares, c AD1400-1550 (eg. Johnston 1997).				
F411:	Metropolitan-type Slipware, 17th - 18th century (Davey and Walker 2009)				

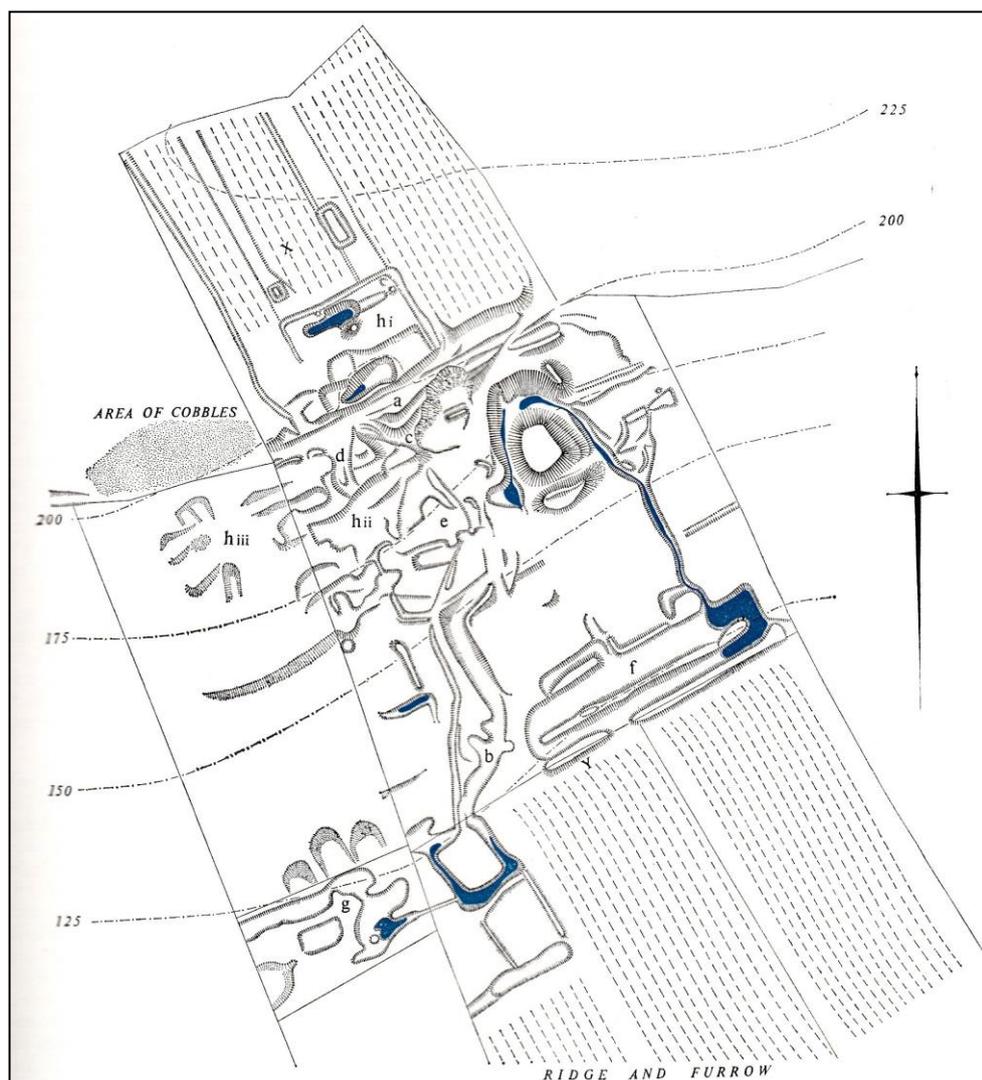
F412:	Midland Blackware, AD 1580-1700 (Brears 1969).				
F425:	Glazed Red Earthenware, 16th - 19th century (Brears 1969).				
F428:	Staffordshire Slipware, AD1640-1750.				
F1000:	Miscellaneous 19th and 20th century wares.				

*Appendix 1. Type descriptions and dates for the pottery found in Field C.
(Classification by Paul Blinkhorn).*

Appendix 2 : Previous knowledge in the area concerned

The immediate area of Clopton has very few entries noted at the Cambridgeshire HER apart from the DMV site itself (which was scheduled 1/10/54). Those records that exist mostly refer to the landscape and architecture around Croydon village itself, which lies nearly 1.5km east of our field walking area.

An excavation by T Lethbridge in the North Field of the village is noted for 1933 but produced little of note. The area was also investigated and planned by the RCHM in 1962 as shown below (RCHM 1968).



The main source of excavated information is the series of excavations carried out by J Alexander in 1961, 1962 and 1964 on the scheduled area (Alexander 1968). Finally Cambridge University collection of aerial photographs has a number for the Clopton site spanning the period 1957 - 1981.